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Finance Director Susan Wright to Retire After 36-Year Municipal Career, 17 With Northampton

NORTHAMPTON - The City of Northampton's Finance Director, Susan Wright, has announced her retirement, effective June 29, 2021, after serving in municipal government for 36 years, including 17 years with the City of Northampton.

"I want to extend my heartfelt thanks and congratulations to Susan Wright for her incredible service to the City of Northampton," said Mayor David J. Narkewicz. "Her deep well of experience in municipal government and finance has been invaluable to our city and the unparalleled financial stability we have achieved over the last 10 years, from rebuilding reserves to record investments in infrastructure, education, and municipal services to achieving a AAA+ bond rating, simply would not have been possible without Susan's steady and trusted financial stewardship."

Susan Wright has dedicated her life to public service in local government. She began her professional career as a Development Specialist with Rural Housing, Inc., in Winchendon, initiating Community Block Development Grant-funded projects in Worcester County. Soon after, in 1985, she simultaneously worked for the towns of Buckland, Colrain, Heath, and Shelburne, as part of an elite corps of "Circuit Riders" who provided municipal administrative services to rural communities in the late 1970s through the 1980s. From there, she worked as Town Administrator exclusively for Colrain for several years. From 1991 through 2004, Ms. Wright served as the Whately and Longmeadow Town Administrator, for 10 years and three years respectively.

Susan Wright joined the City of Northampton in 2004 as Business Manager for the Northampton Public Schools, where she oversaw the finances of the city's largest department advising three different Superintendents and the School Committee. In April of 2011, then-outgoing Mayor Clare Higgins appointed Ms. Wright as the city's Finance Director following the retirement of Chris Pile.

As Finance Director, Susan Wright manages the day to day financial operations of the city, including overseeing its three main financial departments; the offices of the Assessor, Auditor, and Treasurer/Collector. Her responsibilities also include working with the mayor to create the city's annual operating budget and capital improvement program as outlined in the city's

charter. Most recently, Ms. Wright has overseen the city's access to state and federal COVID-19 funding critical to its response to the deadly pandemic, expertly navigating the complex and at times confounding reimbursement rules and processes.

"I have been fortunate to work for a variety of municipalities during my career. From the small rural towns where volunteers ran most aspects of town government and I needed to know a little about a lot of different municipal issues, to a large, professionally run city with a progressive and principled Mayor where I was able to focus my attention on a specific area of municipal expertise. Northampton is fortunate to have dedicated and professional department heads and it has been a pleasure to work with them over the last 17 years," said Ms. Wright, reflecting on her long municipal career.

Ms. Wright is a graduate of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and has been active in multiple professional organizations throughout her career. She is a current member of the Massachusetts Government Finance Officials Association, and in the past has been a member of the Northfield and Charlemont Finance Committees, the Massachusetts Association of School Business Officials, the Massachusetts Municipal Managers Association, the Franklin Regional Council of Governments, and the Franklin County Planning Board. She also served as President of the former Greenfield Area Animal Shelter and was a founding member of the Small Town Administrators of Massachusetts, where she developed lifelong friendships with her Circuit Rider colleagues.

In addition to her skill and experience in municipal government, Susan Wright is also an accomplished weaver and a longtime member of the Weavers Guild of Springfield. Susan attained certification as a Master Weaver from the Hill Institute in 2010 and her work has been shown at local and regional fiber arts shows and conferences. Her family, friends, and colleagues have been the grateful beneficiaries of her nights away from excel spreadsheets spent weaving amazing scarves, hand towels, and other beautiful, handcrafted gifts.

Mayor Narkewicz intends to advertise the Finance Director position immediately and convene a small screening committee to advise him on this critical hire. The Mayor hopes to recommend an appointment to the City Council later this spring with a goal to have Susan Wright's successor in place before she departs at the end of June.

For more information, contact the Mayor's Office at 413-587-1249 or mayor@northamptonma.gov.